



Journalism and action
to open up the public sector



CASE

CIVIO

“**The BOE Hub: Building a User-Friendly Database to Reclaim its Content**

STUDY

IN SHORT

After carefully analyzing its audience's needs, Civio successfully migrated over a decade of content from social media to its own website, launching “The BOE Hub.” This new digital space allows users to easily access, search, and explore information published in Spain's official gazette. The project reduced Civio's dependence on social media algorithms and strengthened its direct connection with readers through an accessible, user-friendly database.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Civio is a Madrid-based news company founded in 2012 dedicated to “investigating how the public sector is managed, highlighting the blind spots, and effecting change,” according to its website. The news outlet emphasizes the importance of government transparency.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Civio aimed to regain control over its content by reducing reliance on social-media platforms, migrating its long-standing BOE project to its website, and organizing years of data into an accessible, searchable, and trustworthy digital archive.



SOLUTIONS

Through design-thinking methods, Civio used rapid prototyping, early user testing, and iterative feedback to refine layouts, improve accessibility, and ensure the database evolved according to real audience needs.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

For the past two years, Civio has grown concerned about the company's lack of visibility on social media and Twitter. The group expressed a desire to be less dependent on social-media algorithms. One of Civio's main projects consists of publishing news based on the Spanish government's official gazette. While this project has lived on Twitter, Civio wanted to migrate it to its website to better control and own the content. Overall, Civio wanted to redirect people from social media to its website and to organize its content into a user-friendly database.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

One highly beneficial aspect of Civio's design-thinking approach was sketching and rapid prototyping. The project's tech lead emphasized exploring "as many ideas as we can" early on. This allowed the organization to visualize different layouts and navigation paths for the project's content archive before committing significant development resources. Moving from initial sketches to refined mockups and ensuring responsiveness across different devices was crucial for early user-experience validation.

Another invaluable aspect has been iterative feedback. Civio's "soft launch" and public beta allowed the organization to gather initial user input. This feedback guided the next steps, such as prioritizing the keyword search functionality. Furthermore, actively collaborating with a visually impaired community member to enhance accessibility highlighted the group's commitment to user-centered design and provided essential insights. This continuous feedback loop ensures the Hub evolves based on genuine user needs.

DID CIVIO'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Yes. Civio's soft launch reached nearly 3,000 users who shared constructive feedback that directly influenced the final design. The Hub's clear navigation and improved usability increased readers' ability to find information efficiently. Audiences reported feeling more connected to Civio's journalism through the platform, describing it as transparent and empowering. The project also strengthened reader trust, as users could now access data independently without relying on social-media updates. This shift toward self-hosted content helped Civio nurture long-term engagement and position The BOE Hub as a reliable, citizen-centered digital archive.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID CIVIO ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

One significant challenge was the migration and organization of 12 years of diverse content from various social media platforms into a unified, searchable database. This involved cleaning, structuring, and importing thousands of micro-pieces of content while ensuring data integrity and historical accuracy. Civio learned the importance of thorough data auditing and preparation before attempting large-scale migrations, as underestimating this could have severely delayed development.

Another challenge was ensuring technical simplicity while building a robust and user-friendly platform that could handle a vast archive and continuous updates. Civio had to balance the desire for advanced features with the need for a stable and efficient system. The lesson learned was that iterative development and continuous user feedback are crucial. This approach allowed Civio to identify critical areas for improvement, like the need for a comprehensive keyword search and personalized content experiences, which it is now prioritizing for future development.

HOW WAS CIVIO'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

Audience reactions have been overwhelmingly positive. Users appreciate the improved navigation and centralized access to official data, praising Civio for reclaiming its content from social media. The Hub's structure allows readers to explore information seamlessly and understand complex government processes more clearly. Initial feedback from thousands of users confirmed that Civio's investment in accessibility and simplicity paid off. The redesign not only improved usability but also reinforced the newsroom's credibility as a transparent, citizen-oriented media organization committed to long-term digital independence.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID CIVIO GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

Civio learned that early-stage feedback is invaluable for shaping sustainable solutions. The soft launch phase proved crucial in identifying improvements, particularly for search functionality and accessibility. The project highlighted the importance of testing real user journeys before scaling development. Another takeaway was the need for balance between innovation and technical feasibility. By listening to audiences and adjusting its priorities accordingly, Civio realized that progress in transparency also depends on usability. The team now applies these insights across other projects to ensure all tools remain intuitive and user-centered.

WHAT DOES CIVIO PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

Moving forward, "The BOE Hub" will be a permanent and evolving feature of Civio's website and it will continue to develop and refine its functionalities based on user feedback. Immediate next steps include implementing basic keyword search functionality to significantly enhance usability, and exploring options for making the app slightly more personalized, such as informing users about new content since their last visit, all while maintaining a strong commitment to user privacy.

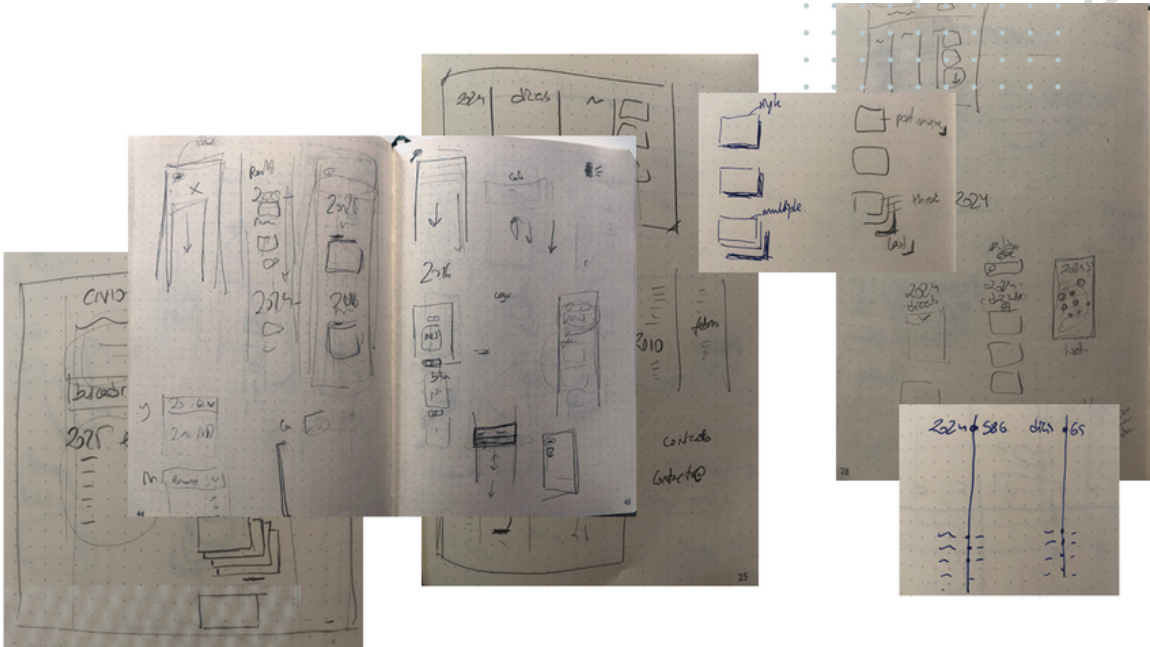
Civio is also planning a comprehensive communication campaign to its 9,600+ loyal BOE newsletter subscribers and all Civio website visitors to widely promote the Hub and encourage deeper engagement. Civio aims to measure the project's impact through key metrics like website traffic growth, increased newsletter subscribers, and improved SEO rankings for relevant search terms. This flexible framework could be adapted to cover other evolving topics or investigative projects.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD CIVIO GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

A key tip is to actively seek and apply feedback, especially in areas outside your core expertise, like web accessibility. Civio has engaged a visually impaired community member to help improve the application's accessibility, which has been invaluable. Additionally, start with a public beta to gather early feedback. Civio's soft launch allowed the group to identify areas for improvement, like the keyword search functionality, ensuring the product evolves based on real user needs.



The BOE Hub in Action



Early Prototyping and Wireframing